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Report of the Administrator on the *Organizational assessment: UNIFEM past, present and future**

I. Introduction

1. At its first regular session, 2006, the Executive Board adopted decision 2006/5 in which it requested the Administrator to report to the Executive Board at its annual session, 2006, his views on the *Organizational assessment: UNIFEM past, present and future* (A/60/62-E/2005/10), taking into account ongoing discussions regarding United Nations reform and the overall gender architecture.

II. Background

2. The *Organizational assessment: UNIFEM past, present and future* was commissioned by the Consultative Committee of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) at its 44th session in 2004 – and undertaken by an advisory panel – with the aim of "maximizing the Fund's ability to implement its mandate".

3. The report was introduced to Member States at the substantive session of ECOSOC of 2005. Through ECOSOC resolution 2005/54 Member States invited the Executive Board of UNDP and UNFPA to consider the report in 2006.

4. At the first regular session of the Executive Board, 2006, the Ambassador of Zambia to the United States, a member of the Advisory Panel to the Consultative Committee of United Nations Development Fund for Women, briefed the Executive Board on the scope, method and findings of the organizational assessment.

* The compilation of data required to present the Executive Board with the most current information has delayed submission of the present document.

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According to the Advisory Panel, while the structure and UNIFEM programmes has evolved significantly in response to an improving political context in support of the empowerment of women and gender equality, the authority and status of UNIFEM has remained static, and the expansion of its core resource base was deemed inadequate. In response to the assessed problems, a set of time-bound recommendations on the future role and structure of UNIFEM was presented in the context of the broader United Nations system.

5. Furthermore, the 46th session of the Consultative Committee of UNIFEM, held on 14-15 February 2006, emphasized that UNIFEM was an essential component of the gender architecture and the ongoing United Nations reform effort and recommended that UNIFEM continue to be involved in all such processes, including the discussion on the mandate review and system-wide coherence, and welcomed the ongoing discussion of the organizational assessment within the United Nations system.

III. Preliminary response to the findings

6. The Administrator acknowledges the *Organizational assessment – UNIFEM past, present and future*, and is pleased to note the work already under way to implement many aspects of the report.

7. UNDP recognizes *the advantage of UNIFEM as a catalytic fund* and its comparative advantage in working in a matrix structure that allows it to be innovative and cost effective without being burdened by a heavy administrative apparatus.

8. UNDP acknowledges favourably *the ability of UNIFEM to build sustainable partnerships through memorandums of understanding with selected United Nations partners*: UNFPA, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Telecommunication Union, the International Organization for Migration and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. UNIFEM also maintained strong partnerships with the United Nations regional economic commissions.

9. As an associated fund of UNDP, *UNIFEM has much to offer in the area of gender mainstreaming for development effectiveness within the United Nations system*. UNIFEM has spearheaded innovations that have had an impact on development effectiveness – for example, its work on MDG-based poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs); gender budgets; violence against women in crisis and post-conflict countries; and the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS. As a 'laboratory' for the United Nations system on the 'how-to' of achieving gender equality, UNIFEM has the potential to make an enormous difference when linked to the capacity of UNDP to scale up innovation through its presence on the ground, its close partnership with governments, and the resident representative system. The experience and knowledge accumulated by UNIFEM will be most useful in strengthening country programmes from the gender perspective.

10. *UNIFEM should not be seen as a substitute for the mandated responsibility of UNDP or other organizations to mainstream gender, as has been the case in the past*. UNDP believes that all organizations must be responsible for mainstreaming gender within their respective mandates, just as the 'quick impact' initiatives should

not become a substitute for investing resources for gender equality and the empowerment of women. Resources must be forthcoming for this important work, as gender equality and the empowerment of women intersect across all dimensions of development. It cannot be the prerogative of any one organization, nor can it be relegated to the social sectors alone, as women make up half of the world's population and therefore do not belong to any specific category. As the torchbearer of the women's movement and an innovator for affecting gender equality outcomes, UNIFEM must no doubt have access to more resources, and in this regard it is hoped that Member States will be forthcoming in fulfilling the resources gap.

11. *In the context of United Nations reform, UNDP welcomes the responsibilities that UNIFEM is already fulfilling.* UNIFEM chairs the Gender Equality Task Force of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). In its role as chair of the task force, UNIFEM has conducted a review of UNDG members' gender polices, strategies and accountability mechanisms for gender mainstreaming; developed training modules on mainstreaming gender equality into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, evaluation processes, and desk reviews of resident coordinators' annual reports for 2004; and recommended revisions to the UNDG guidelines for those annual reports. These are areas of vital importance which will no doubt give greater visibility and prominence to the gender mainstreaming agenda in the United Nations system. Together with the implementation of the United Nations system-wide gender mainstreaming strategy, they will have a far-reaching impact in bringing together all the United Nations organizations to work towards a common vision of gender equality and the empowerment of women, and in holding all United Nations entities accountable for delivering on the targets that have been established. This should also bring about greater clarity and coherence among all the organizations charged with the task of this transformation, on both the normative and operational sides.

12. *The United Nations High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence is working on the issue of simplification and harmonization in the broader context of United Nations reform, including the issue of the future of UNIFEM (which is a decision to be made by Member States).* As an ex-officio member of the panel, the Administrator remains personally committed to strengthening UNDP-UNIFEM partnerships, within the framework of a more gender-responsive UNDG, to work together in a unified, effective and coordinated United Nations system.

13. *The role of the Executive Director of UNIFEM.* The Executive Director of UNIFEM attends meetings in the Security Council, the General Assembly and the United Nations Economic and Social Council. As special adviser to the Administrator on gender issues, the Executive Director of UNIFEM is a member of the UNDP Strategic Management Team and co-chair of the UNDP senior gender task force. She is also a member of the gender steering and implementation committee headed by the Administrator.

14. *Participation of UNIFEM in high-level meetings.* UNDP is open to UNIFEM participation as a part of the UNDP delegation in high-level meetings such as those of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, among others.